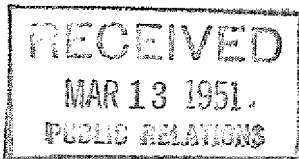


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" OUR DAY OF DESTINY "



Commencement Address  
Ohio State University  
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There are days in our lives that are just days in our lives--and then there are days in our lives that are days of destiny. This is one of those days.

Several hundred thousands of young people will graduate from some college or university during 1951, just as in previous years, but that means little to you. What makes this year and this day important to you is the fact that it is YOU that graduates and receives some degree on this occasion. For most of you this event is the culmination of years of work, in which you have expended effort and money and time in the hope that you would fulfil the requirements for graduation and qualify for the recognition of your attainments which is to be awarded to you on this occasion. A few of you may be here by virtue of grace rather than good works, but college professors have a way of accentuating the distinction between honorary degrees and earned degrees. Some of you may have been blessed with comfortable allowances or incomes, but most of you have had good reason to evaluate "higher education" in terms of its financial cost in these days of the unsanforized dollar. And all of you have been buffeted by the swirling tensions and doubts and anxieties which confuse the mind, burden the heart, and enervate the will of everyone in times like these. To complete your prescribed courses of study and thus lay claim to the degrees to be granted you this day is not just an ordinary accomplishment. In such times and under such circumstances it is an achievement of which you, your parents, and your instructors may well be proud. This is one of those days!

The current world situation invests this occasion with more than usual significance. According to our traditional reckoning of time we are now entering the second half of the 20th century. Two events of

five years ago stand out prominently in our memory and frame the picture of the future. In August of 1945 atomic bombs were dropped in Japan, setting up reactions and waves of shock not only physical but also psychological, moral, and spiritual. Somehow we realized at once that life would not be quite the same again, ever, for any of us. In October of 1945 an organization known as United Nations was formed in San Francisco, expressing the hopes of many that dangerous tensions and difficult problems might yield to multilateral consultation and collaboration as men the world over devoted to the processes of peace the same skills and talents they had invested in the instruments of war. High against the sky over the desert of New Mexico stands a pillar of smoke and vapor; high against the sky over the metropolis of New York stands <sup>a</sup>~~the~~ tower of masonry and glass; and between them we march into whatever future there is for us.

Last summer came the invasion of South Korea, only too reminiscent of Manchuria, Ethiopia, and Czecho-Slovakia. Are we now confronted by a series of ruthless conquests of border nations which will set the stage for Russia's bold bid for world supremacy? Was the reception accorded Red China's spokesmen at Lake Success another futile Munich? Shall the coming months be occupied by frantic efforts to stamp out explosive sparks now here, now there, lest global warfare erupt? Or shall the dreaded conflagration sweep over the earth on such catastrophic scale as would eclipse the frightful destruction of World War II? Can our social structure stand the violent dislocation of over five million young men twice within a decade? Can our financial structure stand the profligate expenditure of billions of dollars for armaments and military installations? Must the constructive endeavors and agencies of America again be

handicapped as top priority in the use of natural resources and manpower is assigned to the gruesome business of making the instruments of death and destruction and training our youth to use them with dallous efficiency? What awful sacrifices must be made in terms of human lives and human values, in terms of morals and ideals, in terms of education and religion and wivie welfare? Can this nation, can civilization, survive a third world war?

This is our day of destiny. For better or for worse you and I are woven into the fabric of history at this crucial place in the pattern of events. It is idle fancy for us to wish that we might have reached our manhood and womanhood in <sup>the</sup> twenties or thirties or forties; we are living in the fateful fifties. Those who face the facts realistically, who seek no escape by wishful thinking or sentimental philosophizing, must move forward into the second half of the 20th century either with stark fear or with sturdy faith. There is no intelligent in-between.

Are we but the toys of capricious chance? Are we but the puppets of unfeeling fate? Are we but the helpless victims of a concatenation of circumstances over which we have no control? Is it folly, delusion, and presumption to talk in terms of destiny at such a time? Life in the years immediately ahead of us will constitute a rigorous test of all that our education, our culture, our religion have given each of us.

"The dignity of man," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "is his freedom, his capacity to make and remake history, to search out all things and to inquire after the meaning of existence." Can it be that in an age when man has mastered the forces of nature as never before he has less freedom than ever before? Can it be that when man has attained a perspective and understanding of all the complex sociolôgical factors which influence the course of nations and civilizations unequalâd in previous history he

is utterly unable to determine the kind of life he will live or the program of progress his community or nation will pursue in the future to reach his chosen goal and accomplish what he has purposed? Can it be that with all man's genius for scientific investigation and for rational interpretation, analysis and synthesis, equipped with all the learning and critical apparatus of past centuries, he still cannot find out the meaning of his own existence? If so, it matters little that you and thousands like you have fulfilled curricular requirements and passed academic tests: man himself, his education, his culture, his religion, have failed miserably, have flunked the most significant examination of life itself.

Sir Richard Livingstone, President of Corpus Christi College in Oxford, recently expressed his cogent criticism of our generation: "We do not know our own minds about the most important things of life. . .Having no philosophy of life, we drift along--or, rather, we slither. . .Virtues without a real, intellectual commitment are precarious. . .When right and wrong lose their meaning, power takes control. . .And power ends up in disaster. . .Our own age has sex on the brain."

In his fascinating book, "The Mind's Adventure," President Lowry of Wooster College writes: "Life and education are, or should be, the pursuit of significance. . .What makes us live is whatever enhances our capacity to confer a meaning on what we know and feel in our given span of years. . . But this quest requires a scale of high values and the highest faith possible to man. . .Secularism has not furnished an adequate sense of these values or an adequate drive toward them."

These are but two of many voices which cry out to us today to arouse us from our supine sense of helplessness, to challenge our ready recourse to cynicism, to encourage us to look life full in the face and find the

ultimate answers for our really important questions. It simply will not do for us to protest that there are no answers, or to plead that we cannot discover them, or to insist that we are too busy with the necessary chores of living to bother with them. As intelligent, educated men and women, who are responsible for what we do with our own lives and for what we do for the lives of others, we must face the issues of life and make decisions. Whether we think or refuse to think, whether we act or refuse to act, in every situation which confronts us our every motivation, decision, and action goes on the eternal record, just as it did for all who have gone before us, of whom we read in history.

Not that we live in a vacuum. We are inextricably involved in our own social context, the product of countless characteristics and influences from progenitors and contemporaries, the target of a barrage of stimuli constantly impinging on us from our environment, caught up in the swirl of current events and trends of thought, conditioned by the situations in which we find ourselves and the predilections which affect our responses to these situations. Yet inherent in the very essence of personality is the freedom and the power to determine what shall come of all this, what kind of person each of us shall be, what kind of life each of us shall live. We cannot escape moral responsibility by attempting to reduce ourselves to laboratory specimens of biochemistry and mechanics. A real man can maintain his convictions even in a concentration camp, his integrity even in the midst of vice and corruption, his aspirations even in the face of frustrations, his faith even under afflictions.

Isn't that the fundamental postulate which underlies, permeates, and gives meaning to the entire educational process? More than mere facts and figures, formulae and definitions, skills and proficiencies are involved in any education worthy of the name. Only in terms of personality,

can an adequate philosophy of education be constructed. And since man is a psychosomatic unit, education must be more than an intellectual discipline: it must include the total personality, integrating the mental and moral and physical and social and spiritual interests and activities of the student in a coherent and purposeful program. It was a distinct advance in the philosophy of education when the Harvard Report some five years ago stated the objective of education in terms of personality: to produce the good person. Only the good person can live the good life--and the good person can live the good life even though many conditions in his environment are not conducive to the good life. Our whole philosophy of education posits a degree of freedom and power and responsibility in man to be the good person and live the good life in any age, at any place, under any circumstances.

And exactly at this point must our educational processes and our educational system submit to a rigorous scrutiny of their soundness and effectiveness. Is it true, as many parents and employers and military leaders assert, that much of education unfits the young man and woman for real work, for the practicalities of life, for co-operative effort? Much of this criticism is obviously unfair and contradictory. For if the college or university insists on fixed patterns of courses and formal discipline, these very critics are the first to protest that students should be allowed to select that which they consider most helpful in the light of their vocational interests. And if the educational institution does allow much flexibility and latitude in the organization of the curriculum, the charge is made that we have no university but a diversity, a program of scatteration, with emphasis on the narrow interest of the individual and loss of breadth. In an effort to meet all these objections we find colleges becoming almost schizophrenic in

their attempt to provide a general education as the modern stream-lined version of the traditional liberal arts and at the same time cater to the vocational and frankly utilitarian needs of their students. If too much stress is laid upon the latter, educational institutions are faulted as failing to cultivate personalities of character and culture who can provide leadership adequate for the needs of today and tomorrow. If more attention is given to the broader cultural aspects of higher education, the charge is made that we may be training persons to be good persons but not good for anything in particular.

What has complicated the problem of curriculum for colleges and universities still more is the prevalent tendency of professional and graduate schools to raise their standards and entrance requirements in the face of many more applicants that can be admitted, with the result that on the under-graduate level specialization and a narrow departmentalization becomes almost inevitable. Yet it is the serious concern of every university or college that its graduates be prepared to make a success not only of their profession but of their life, contributing to society not only their vocational services but the benefit of their matured personalities, their culture, their sound sense of values and valid processes of reasoning.

This gives point to the classic phrase of Prof. Whitehead in his comment that education should provide "the habitual vision of greatness." This is exactly what this generation needs, and that is exactly what education ought to give. We are distressed to note the prevalence of small men in big places, of small thinking about big problems, of narrow and short-sighted policies in the face of far-reaching implications. This day of destiny demands greatness. And our educational institutions are expected to incubate greatness, to furnish men and women whose char-



be marked by the quality of greatness. Somehow along with our peering into microscopes and test-tubes, our porring over columns of figures and pages of critical analysis, our study of social problems, and our interpretation of literature and the fine arts, we must be confronted persistently by "the habitual vision of greatness." We should catch some glimpses of true greatness in our extra-curricular activities and the social life on the campus. And we must utilize to the utmost all the moral and spiritual forces available to us, as well as the agencies which are dedicated to the moral and spiritual interests of man.

Whether on the campus, back in home-town, or in the community where we shall find our places after today, we cannot neglect private and public worship, the private and public study of the Bible, prayer and meditation, and the investment of some part of ourselves in the service of others, except at our peril and to our loss. Our moral and spiritual development is achieved as is our intellectual and physical development, by proper nourishment and exercise. It cannot be denied that in the effort to preserve the mutual independence of church and state our schools have quite generally avoided or ignored religion. Anything which is so obviously a part of our total personality cannot be left out of the equation without making our educational process incomplete and inadequate. Robert Hutchins put it aptly when he said, "If a college or university is going to think about important things, then it must think about religion." And Sir Richard Livingstone underscores the same truth in his observation: "Anyone in western civilization who has not thought seriously about Christianity is not really educated." One simply cannot understand most of our literature, art, music, history, and psychology apart from the many influences, subtle or pronounced, which Christianity has infiltrated into western civilization for many centuries.

It is precisely because we have tried to evade or ignore the moral and religious issues of life, and the moral and religious education of our youth, that we have become what Elton Trueblood so graphically calls "a cut-flower generation." The roots of our culture go down deep into our religious beliefs and attitudes--but the present generation has been cut off from its roots. No wonder so many feel a lack of security, find no meaning in life, despair of any valid norm of truth and goodness, seek satisfaction in the superficialities of sensate or even sensual self-indulgence. People simply cannot starve their own souls, deny God or defy God, violate the conditions of successful living, and then expect to enjoy successful lives. Like former civilizations we can go on for a time by virtue of the heritage of former generations, utilizing what has been stored up in the stems even though the roots have been cut off, but soon such a culture grows brittle, then withers, and decays.

In all our creative arts men speak to one another, but louder than all their eloquence of drama, music, literature, painting and sculpture is the witness of their own personality. The treasure which has been imparted to you in your education is more than the arts and sciences you were taught. Bits of information we have crammed for an examination are soon forgotten, but we shall long remember the professors in whose classes we have been. They have shared with us a bit of themselves, and they become all the bigger personalities for all that they have given away. In them we should have seen something of "the habitual vision of greatness." There is no better reward for the true teacher than the assurance here and there a few of his disciples have caught from him "the habitual vision of greatness," which they in turn will share with others through many years to come.

Leaving these halls of learning, this congenial company of fellow-students, this distinguished array of teachers, each one of you must now seek the primary sources of the vision of greatness and of that which nourishes and exercises greatness. Where shall you go if not to the illustrious men and women of history whose greatness of character, genius, and service entitled them to the fame which perpetuates their memory? And even beyond them you and I must go that we may find the ultimate source of their greatness, the high ideals, the flaming enthusiasm, the complete dedication of themselves to their fixed purpose, which gave them that touch of greatness. At the very top of the list stands the greatest of them all, the Master of all and the Servant of all, Whose greatness we commemorate in this sacred season. His loyalty to truth, His fellowship with God above, His integrity of character and life, His sacrificial service even unto death, His demonstration of the victory which God can give us even though men deny, betray, forsake, abuse, hate, and kill, present to us the sublime vision of greatness which we should try to make habitual in ourselves. If ever God spoke through man and wrought His purposes through man, it was in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Yea, if ever God was in man, it was in the person of Jesus Christ.

If it seems to some of you, called into military service in which you may suffer hardships, perhaps even death, for no particular fault of your own, that the youth of today are being crucified, think of Him Who with more innocence than any of us can claim "endured the cross, despising the shame" and thus attained eternal glory. There is such a thing as seeking to save our lives and thus losing our very life; ~~as~~ there is such a thing as risking and even losing our lives and thus saving our very life. This is a universal principle, preeminently exemplified in the Holy One Who, confronted by the cross and recognizing a purpose and meaning in it, took up that cross for mankind and made of its curse a

blessing; of its doom, deliverance; of its shame, an everlasting glory.

At that pivotal point in all man's history God revealed the sublime paradox of human destiny: Love is stronger than hate, though its victim; Life is triumphant over death, though submitting to it; Good conquers evil, though crucified by it; and God will save His lost world, though rejected by it. The guiding hand of God still reaches down into human affairs: it is He that judges the nations and saves to the uttermost those who commit themselves and their cause to Him.

It takes the tug of God at a man's life to invest it with greatness. There are demonic forces of evil that would drag us downward: witness the sordid stories of crime and vice that smear the pages of our newspapers every day! As ugly as the worst atrocities of war are these vicious outrages perpetrated in the private life and the public life of those who dwell in our midst. A sense of personal responsibility to God, a standard of right and wrong, a distrust of our natural impulses, are derided as antiquated theology which must yield to naturalistic and humanistic explanations of the nature of man. Any forthright condemnation of sin is flouted as unscientific, since man is but the product of an evolutionary process in which survival, adaptation, expediency, and security are the law and the illusion of human progress is the gospel. The glib cleverness of commercial advertising casts an aura of glamor over self-indulgence, sensuality, and lust, assuring us that through medical discoveries we need not reap what we have sown and the wages of sin need not be death. Luxury is made to appear more important than righteousness, gadgets more important than godliness.

By what arbitrary judgment do we rule out of the realm of reality everything that cannot be apprehended by the five senses and declare immaterial anything that is not material? By what infallible dictum do we

declare null and void any belief or motivation which cannot be verified by scientific investigation or the unaided processes of reason? By what authority do we strike out the vertical plane entirely and limit man's relationships and communication entirely to the horizontal? If we would regain some adequate concept of life in all its dimensions, some valid standard of values, some satisfying notion of the worth and dignity of man, some sense of destiny which ennobles our existence and gives it meaning, we must undo these ghastly mistakes of secularistic thinking. Man does not live by bread alone but by the revelation of God which speaks to the spirit in us all. Without God, faith, righteousness, love, and all the spiritual realities, life is folly, futility, fatality!

Silhouetted against the lurid glow of the Atomic Age, man now moves with faltering feet into the uncertain future. This is our day of destiny. We are participants in a dramatic episode of history: what we are and what we do will in some small measure determine what shall be the future of our individual lives, of our nation, of the world. We enter the second half of the 20th century with faith, not fear. For over all the confusion of our day is the good and gracious will of God, which all the powers of evil cannot finally frustrate. He weaves the tiny threads of our individual lives and the broad figures of the course of nations into the total pattern of the tapestry which is the history of man. We cannot see the finished design, and so we cannot understand the reason for this stitch and that in our own experience or in the world events around us. But if we look to God for guidance and trust His promises, accepting our own responsibility prayerfully and manfully, we may face and bear all the future holds in store for us.

For we know that amid all the accidentals of our existence there is a constant worthy of our faith. God has His own wise and loving plans

for His world and for His children, and those who put their trust in Him shall never be ashamed. Those who ask shall receive: salvation and blessing from God. And those who seek shall find: the way and the truth and the life. And to those who knock a door shall be opened: the door to an eternal destiny, glorious and triumphant.

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